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FOR MAY, 1811.

WILLIAM PRESTON, ESQ.*

MASTER OF THE LODGE OF ANTIQUITY, NO. 1. ACTING BY IMMEMORIAL
CONSTITUTION.

[WITH A PORTRAIT.]

“His excellence,” says a modern biographer, “has a right to be called upon, by numerous friends of our Publication, to add to those of the great which already adorn our pages, a PORTRAIT and a HISTORY of this gentleman; who is well known to have attained the very acmé of his skill in the ancient and venerable lore of FREEMASONRY.

William Preston, Esq. (his father), was an eminent writer to the signature of Edinburgh, married, in 1740, Miss Cumming, daughter of Mr. James Cumming, of that city; and by her had five children; of whom, however, four died in infancy; William, her second son (the subject of our memoir), alone surviving.

In 1750, Mr. Preston retired to his seat at Lighthgow, twelve miles distant from Edinburgh; and in the following year died suddenly, in a fit of apoplexy, while on a visit at the house of a friend, the Rev. Mr. Fieldum, of Torphichen, near Torphichen, where he afterwards interred. Though Mr. Preston, by the death of his

only sister, left a considerable property in the city of Edinburgh, yet, through the mismanagement of his guardians, and his own unfortunate attachment to some friends who espoused the cause of the Stuart cause, after the rebellion in 1745, his business suffered a temporary suspension, which preyed on his spirits, and impaired both his health and his fortune.

WILLIAM, his son, to whom our attention will be henceforth directed, was born at Edinburgh, July 28, O.S. 1742; and having finished his English education under the tuition of Mr. Stirling, a celebrated teacher in Edinburgh, before he was six years of age, was entered at the High School, where, under Messrs. Farquhar, Gibbs, and Lee, he made considerable progress in the Latin tongue. From the High School he went to college, and was taught the rudiments of the Greek under Professor Hunter.

While he was at the university, his habits of study, and attention to literature, recommended him to the notice of the very celebrated grammarian, Mr. Thomas Ruddiman, who, from intense application to classical pursuits, and the infirmities of age, had greatly impaired, and at length totally lost, his sight. To the friendship and protection of this gentleman Mr. Preston having been consigned after the death of his father, he left college to attend on his patron as an amanuensis, in which character he continued till Mr. Ruddiman's decease.

Before that event, however, Mr. Ruddiman had bound young Preston apprentice to his brother, Walter Ruddiman, printer in Edinburgh; but his eyesight having, as before observed, failed him long before he died, he employed Mr. Preston the greater part of his apprenticeship in reading to him, and in transcribing such of his works as were not completed, as well as correct-

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